

about how we can ensure that on-line commerce will live up to its enormous promise.

On Thanksgiving, beyond our family's personal blessings, my family and I gave thanks for the enormous prosperity America is carrying forward into the 21st century. One of the key reasons our economy continues to thrive, with the longest peacetime expansion in history, is that we're making the most of new technologies. Especially, the Internet and other information technologies are revolutionizing our economy, powering one-third of our economic growth.

As the Vice President will make clear in a report he'll soon release, few applications of information technology have more potential than electronic commerce. During the holiday season alone, on-line shopping could exceed \$9 billion, doubling or even tripling the on-line totals for the same period last year.

About 4 million American families will buy some of their gifts on-line for the first time this holiday season. I intend to join them, because on-line shopping has significant benefits not just for consumers and large, established retailers. On-line commerce also opens a world of opportunity for local artisans and small entrepreneurs.

As with shopping in stores, when consumers shop on the Internet, they must take basic precautions to ensure that what they see is what they get. To help familiarize on-line consumers with these precautions, the Federal Trade Commission has prepared a useful check list. You can find the complete checklist at www.consumer.gov.

But today I'd like to emphasize at least some of the essentials. First, in the on-line world, you must pay close attention to details. Carefully check for shipping and delivery dates, for extra fees, warranties, return policies, and phone numbers to call if you run into a problem. Second, always buy with a credit card. With credit cards you are protected by Federal law against

unauthorized charges. Third, guard your privacy at all times. Look for the unbroken key or padlock symbols on the order page to ensure that your credit card information will be transmitted securely. Don't share passwords with anyone, and be sure to read the merchant's privacy policy to see what information is being collected about you and how it will be used.

I'm pleased to announce that, thanks to the leadership of Vice President Gore, many leading companies and organizations, including the Better Business Bureau's OnLine, American Express, MasterCard, Dell, Get Netwise, eBay, America OnLine, and Amazon.com, all are joining with us to protect and educate consumers this holiday season. Many are distributing guides to help people shop on-line safely and wisely. Some are offering financial guarantees that go above and beyond Federal law. If we want Internet commerce to continue to grow, we all must work together to make sure that shopping on-line is just as safe as shopping in a mall.

I'd like to close today by asking all of you to think not only about using the Internet to buy gifts for friends and family but also to give more lasting gifts to our community and our future. As I discovered during the philanthropy conference we held at the White House last month, charitable websites, like Helping.org, have made signing up to contribute time or money in your community as easy as checking on the weather. So this holiday season, let's use every avenue possible, including the Internet, to give something back to our communities.

Enjoy the rest of your Thanksgiving weekend, and thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:17 p.m. on November 26 at Camp David, MD, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 26 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Ulster Unionist Council Vote on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

November 27, 1999

I welcome this historic step toward lasting peace in Northern Ireland and congratulate

David Trimble on his leadership in bringing about a successful vote in the Ulster Unionist

Council. The Ulster Unionist decision today, which follows critical decisions by all the pro-agreement parties over the past several weeks, is an important move forward to full implementation of the Good Friday accord in all its aspects. Beginning next week, government in Northern Ireland is being put back directly in

the hands of all the people. I welcome this progress and urge all parties to continue working together on building the foundations for lasting peace. I pledge the support of the United States to all those who are helping to make possible a brighter future for Northern Ireland.

Remarks on Signing Consolidated Appropriations Legislation for Fiscal Year 2000

November 29, 1999

Thank you. Good afternoon. Please be seated. I want to welcome the Members of Congress who are here, members of the Cabinet, the police officers and teachers who are shielding me from the cold wind—[laughter]—and who represent the big winners in this year's budget. I would like to say a special word of thanks to Jack Lew, Sylvia Mathews, Larry Stein, and Martha Foley for the work that they did on this budget. And I know that many Members of the Senate and the House who are here brought their staff members who worked on the budget. I want to thank them for their work, as well.

Last January, in my State of the Union Address, I asked our Congress to use this truly historic time of peace and prosperity to meet our generation's responsibilities to the new century: to extend our economic prosperity, improve our education system, make our streets safer, protect our environment, move more Americans from welfare to work, prepare for the aging of our Nation, and strengthen our leadership in the world. The first budget of the 21st century was a long time in coming, but it goes a very long way toward fulfilling those historic responsibilities.

Though it leaves some challenges unmet, it represents real progress. It is a budget for a Government that lives within its means and lives up to the values of the American people. We value prosperity, and this budget will help to extend it. It maintains the fiscal discipline that has turned deficits into surpluses and gives us what will be in February the longest economic expansion in the history of the United States.

It avoids risky tax cuts that would have spent hundreds of billions of dollars from the Social

Security surplus and drained our ability to advance education and other important public purposes.

The budget keeps us on track toward paying down the debt so that in 15 years, our Nation will be debt-free for the first time since 1835. This will mean lower interest rates and greater growth for a whole generation of Americans.

We value education, and this budget truly puts education first, continuing our commitment to hire 100,000 highly qualified teachers to lower class size in the early grades, which common sense and research both tells us leads to improved learning.

The budget also helps to fulfill another promise I made last winter, to encourage more accountability for results in our Nation's schools. Under this budget, for the first time we will help States and school districts turn around or shut down their worst performing schools, schools that year after year fail to give our most disadvantaged students the learning they need to escape poverty and reach their full potential. And the budget provides further help for students to reach higher standards by doubling funds for after-school and summer school programs, which will enable us to reach hundreds of thousands of more students, and by increasing support for mentoring programs, including the GEAR UP program to help students go on to college.

We value the safety of our families, and this budget will make America a safer place. It invests in our COPS program, which already has funded 100,000 community police officers and helped to give us the lowest crime rate in 25 years. This agreement will help to hire up to 50,000 more community police officers, targeted